

I have read the NAB's complaints and the associated bill. One does not need to look further than Clear Channel's recent gaffe in not reporting local severe weather warnings to a threatened community to see that the effectiveness of "emergency radio service" is a joke. Both satellite radio providers offer a much-needed and in-demand service with their traffic and weather reports. Commercial radio is unable and UNWILLING to provide important traffic and weather situations on the fly as XM and Sirius are able to. Commercial radio doesn't see profitability in doing their own traffic/weather-only station, so listeners who are in need of instant information are relegated to top- and bottom-of-the-hour newscasts to get what they demand, provided a station in their area even programs news. And in many markets, stations are voicetracked (pre-recorded) and/or piped in generically by satellite. Neither style offers INSTANT, UP-TO-DATE information, if any information at all. As an employee of such a satellite format provider, I can attest to newscasts being pre-recorded in the early AM hours, then rebroadcasted throughout the day. And also as an employee of the company that supplies traffic information to XM Radio, and as a subscriber to XM's programming, I can assure you that no terrestrial station in my market provides ANYTHING even remotely similar or with the same priority and urgency. I am in the 5th largest US market, by the way, and in the heart of "Tornado Alley." Instant access to severe conditions is vital to survival. Terrestrial stations' concern is NOT for the safety of its listeners, but are irritated by the potential loss of listeners brought about by satellite radio's existence. Now there is a choice, and surely terrestrial stations will (or already are) feeling the effects. Now with yet ANOTHER reason for listeners to tune away from local stations (by providing weather and traffic,) local stations are lashing out at the wave of the future, just to protect their own investment. The bottom line is that, if lives can be saved by reporting instant, on-demand weather and traffic conditions, then satellite radio has proven its value...and terrestrial radio is exposed for its self-imposed limitations. Their choice to NOT be as proactive is not satellite radio's fault.

If emergency local radio service is the all-new concern, someone should ask Clear Channel if they plan to install a full-time airstaff at every one of their stations to keep abreast of severe weather conditions. The answer to that question should show their level of sincerity about this issue, and what their TRUE motivation is.

You should compare this situation to the advent of cable television in the late 1970s. Doesn't The Weather Channel provide constant, instant weather in the same, exact manner? Including local content every 10 minutes? And viewers pay for cable, much the same way as satellite radio subscribers pay for service. Does The Weather Channel take away from locally-produced weathercasts? Possibly, but ISN'T IT MORE IMPORTANT TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC than to quibble over the selfish requests of special-interest groups like the NAB? And my local cable system has a local, 24-hour cable-only news channel that provides constant traffic and weather updates. Folks, IT'S THE SAME THING. But nobody's raising a stink about that.

I urge you to consider the value and necessity of local traffic and weather on demand, and to identify the NAB's REAL motivation for provoking this fight.